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Sedentary Moslems of Sinkiang/

Prostitution is not widespread among the Moslem Turks, and in many places it is hardly known. Travellers who are separated from their wives often will contract temporary marriages when they are in strange towns for a length of time. At the time that this marriage is contracted, a future divorce is written also. There are, however, quite a few Chinese prostitutes in the main cities where the Chinese reside in great numbers.

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B. Marriage and Divorce Customs

Among the Moslem Turks of Northwest China the marriage age is usually 12-14 for girls, and 15-16 for boys. The Islamic religion considers incestuous such combinations as the following: brother and sister, uncle and niece, stepfather and stepdaughter, aunt and nephew, stepson and widowed stepmother, etc. Besides these restrictions, it is considered unethical to marry one's daughter to an infidel, a Chinese, a Tibetan, a Hindu, or a Mongol.

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Matchmaking is a necessary prelude to marriage. The matches are usually concluded by the parents while the individuals concerned have little to say in the issue. It is not uncommon for parents to arrange their children's marriage before they reach marriage age or even soon after they are born. Next to the parents, the matchmakers play the most important role in the conclusion of a marriage. In some places the matchmakers are close male relatives of the bridegroom's father; in others, this role often is given to women, who engage in concluding deals of this kind.

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The usual procedure is for the matchmakers, authorized by the father of the boy, to go to the prospective bride's parents to discuss the matter with her father. If they receive the consent of the girl's parents to consider the matter, they go back to the boy's father and inform him of the developments. He then sends a present of a sheep to the girl's house five or six days later, and comes with his family to discuss the gifts that his son is going to give the bride and arrangements for the wedding. The former issue usually involves much bargaining and disputing. The young man pays no actual bride-price for his wife, but he has to give her gifts consisting of clothing items and jewelry. The value of the presents often depends on the wealth and social status of the bridegroom's family. Once an agreement has been reached, the sheep is slaughtered for the occasion and the engagement of the couple is celebrated. The wedding gifts are brought to the bride's parents, and their acceptance is considered the final conclusion of the agreement.

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If it is the first marriage of the girl importance is attached to the wedding ceremony. Her parents extend an invitation to a great many relatives and friends or, if rich, they may invite the whole village or the whole neighborhood to the celebration. The mullas, who will conduct the religious ceremony, are also present. The